

The Voice in the Pillow

SETTINGS: A car, a bedroom, outside a house, a high school classroom.

FOUR CHARACTERS:

PAUL GODDARD—(40's/50's) high school history teacher— just fired.

MARIE GODDARD— (40's/50) wife, librarian at public library.

CATHERINE (CATH)— (mid 20's) their daughter, realtor.

“WOO-WOO” (ageless)— a geomancer. His real name is never mentioned.

‘Woo-Woo’ is a derogative term skeptics use for geomancy— landscape divination and the placement of stones to enhance the aliveness of a site.

PROPS: A bed. Something resembling six large stones (possibly large pumpkins) spaced apart in two triangular configurations— one downstage right, the other downstage left. If you were to draw lines from the center of each stone configuration, they would cross through the head of the bed.

Beep-beep sound of a car door unlocking in high school parking lot.

Lights come up on PAUL walking from audience onto the stage. He lugs a loaded cardboard box and a briefcase to his car (could be a rolling office chair). He wears a saggy pale blue shirt and sport coat. His lips are pinched like he ate something sour. He stops at car, stares into space, hunched and broken.

PAUL

What have I done?

He sets the box and briefcase down.

PAUL

No... no, it was him. That guy.

PAUL takes out cell phone, punches numbers.

Sound of ringtone.

A light comes up on CATH upstage center.

CATH

Dad?

PAUL

Cath...

CATH

I was going to call you. I heard there was a scare at the school.

PAUL

I need that woo-woo guy's number.

CATH

Who?

PAUL

The guy you and your mom hired to do that woo-woo at the house.

CATH

You mean the geomancer?

PAUL

What's his number?

CATH

Mom told me she feels a whole lot better. No headaches. She's sleeping. That's huge.

PAUL

Yeah, well it's not. Did she tell you she's hearing things in her pillow?

CATH

What things?

PAUL

A voice. In her *pillow*. How can that be good?

CATH

She didn't mention that.

PAUL

She wouldn't. Yesterday she's in the backyard. I heard her telling the maple trees, "We're all in this together." Next thing she's on the porch singing a duet with the wind.

CATH

She said she feels "renewed."

PAUL

And I just got fired.

CATH

What? Dad, no!

PAUL
Yeah.

CATH
I'm sorry. Does mom...?

PAUL
Not yet, I'm...

CATH
Maybe it's for the better. You were bored. Mom said, "depressed." And you hated that principal.

PAUL
He hated me, the turd.

CATH
See... it's...

PAUL
Stop. Don't say, "It's all about the journey."

CATH
Okay. So... why'd they fire you?

PAUL
Just gimme WOO-WOO'S number.

PAUL steps into car. Sets phone in holder, keys ignition.

Lights dim on PAUL. Come up on MARIE in bed (three mornings ago). She yawns, stretches her arms.

PAUL
(heard not seen)
You were talking in your sleep again.

MARIE
You heard me from the other bedroom?

PAUL
How could I not?

MARIE
What'd I say?

PAUL
You were gushing about something.

MARIE
Oh... *(smiles)* yeah. A river spoke to me.

PAUL
A river? Really?

MARIE
A river of doves.

Slow fade of lights on MARIE.

Sound of dial tone.

Lights come back on PAUL, driving.

PAUL
Come on, come on...

A light comes up on WOO-WOO, upstage, a walking stick in his hand. He's grounded, down to earth. He wears fire-hose pants, a clean white shirt and vest. He is NOT to be played cute, comic, or pretentious.

WOO-WOO
(answers call)
Hello?

PAUL
What did you do?

WOO-WOO
Sorry?

PAUL
This is Paul Goddard. You put those big rocks outside our house the other day.

WOO-WOO
(smiles)
Ah, yes. The history teacher.

PAUL
I want them gone.

WOO-WOO

Oh... may I ask...?

PAUL

Right away. Since you did that, Marie's been hearing voices in her pillow.

WOO-WOO

Her pillow? Oh, I see why she might say that. But it's not the pillow. It's coming from the land under the bed.

PAUL

Under the what!?

WOO-WOO

The energy was stuck. I placed the quartzite stones to open up the blocked earth currents. Bring back circulation.

PAUL

(scoffs "horseshit" to himself)

Listen, I'm on my way home and I want you to come and remove them. Now! Take all your New Agey shit back. You got that?!

WOO-WOO

It's not New-Agey, it's... *(the call is ended)* ...hello?

Lights dim on PAUL and WOO-WOO. Come up on MARIE walking from bed (two mornings ago.)

MARIE

(yawns)

Good morning.

MARIE stretches with a smile.

PAUL

Morning.

MARIE

Dear, I dreamt I could fly. It was easy and it felt so real. Four wings sprouted right out of my head. They lifted me off the ground *(lifts her arms)*, and I flew over a field of herbs. *(sniffs)* I can still smell the rosemary.

PAUL

Oh... those voices in your pillow again.

MARIE
Yes. And I heard you too ... later.

PAUL
Down the hall?

MARIE
Uh-huh.

PAUL
What'd I say?

MARIE
I needed subtitles. It was in snore language.

Slow fade of lights on MARIE. Up on PAUL as he stops car, kills engine, droops head.

PAUL
Ssshit. What was I thinking?

WOO-WOO appears upstage with walking stick. He moves downstage left. PAUL steps out of car, approaches him.

WOO-WOO
Is Marie here?

PAUL
(shakes head)
At work.

WOO-WOO
Before I take away the stones, I need you to understand what was happening. I don't think you were listening before.

WOO-WOO walks to the rocks downstage right. PAUL follows.

PAUL
It doesn't matter.

WOO-WOO
The planet is threaded with veins of energy. The ones that crossed under the bed were blocked.

WOO-WOO makes crossing gesture with forearms.

PAUL
(plays along)

Okay, and that means?

WOO-WOO
The land is our greater body. What befalls the land reflects back to us. You're a history teacher. Ever think about what this continent has absorbed? This property? *(Doesn't wait for response)* Something tragic happened here.

PAUL
(folds arms against chest)

Like what?

WOO-WOO
Given the grief, I'd say a sudden, untimely death. Perhaps a child. *(points to treatment site with walking stick)* And the shockwave clogged the flow.

PAUL
So, what's that got to do with the voice in Marie's pillow?

WOO-WOO
I'd say she's hearing the land breathe again. You want the planet to breathe, don't you, Mr. Goddard?

PAUL
You talk like it's a person.

WOO-WOO explains as he crosses to the triangle of stones downstage right.

WOO-WOO
When energy currents become defiled, or their flow disrupted, the planet loses its ability to rebalance.

WOO-WOO steps between stones and the wall outside bedroom.

WOO-WOO
Ahhh. Come over here. Feel this.

PAUL walks over to where WOO-WOO stands.

PAUL
Feel what?

WOO-WOO
(waves hand)
The vibe. It's like a sparkling fountain. *(looks at PAUL)* Anything?

PAUL

Nothing.

WOO-WOO

After opening an obstructed site, there's a rush of energy for three or four days. Like busting a dam. I never know how it will affect the occupants. It can be extreme. So I prepare them for bottled up things that may arise.

CATH appears, all serious. She wears a tucked-in blouse, suit jacket, necklace and ankle boots. She nods to WOO-WOO.

PAUL

Cath. You didn't have to...

CATH

I called the high school to find out what happened. But they wouldn't tell me.

PAUL

No surprise.

CATH

Have you spoken to mom?

PAUL

Not yet.

CATH

You look awful.

WOO-WOO

I was telling your dad how the treatments might stir things up. Bring out old, unspoken feelings. Not all bad, some quite wonderful.

PAUL

Yeah, they stirred things up alright. I just got fired from my job!

WOO-WOO

Oh.

CATH

So, what happened, Dad?

PAUL

I don't know what's going on anymore. I just want it to stop. Get these rocks out of here!

PAUL kicks one of the rocks. WOO-WOO flinches.

CATH
(to her dad)

What'd you do?

PAUL looks away.

PAUL

Too ashamed to say.

CATH

Dad! Talk!

PAUL
(let's out a sigh)

Started the moment I stepped into the classroom. I felt a fist in my gut. I'd been fretting about your mom. But that wasn't it. As I went down the rows of desks, passing out test sheets, I'm looking at students soon to be out in the world, and I feel this intense dread. How nothing's going to change. Nothing. History will repeat itself—the wars, the horrors, the eternal return of tyrants and terror, mass graves, and rubble. The next generation doomed to rerun.

CATH
(after pause)

... and?

PAUL's whole body clenches as he acts it out.

PAUL

I'm fuming. I want to revolt. I want the students to revolt. Bust out of this hamster wheel of Hell. But how? And then I hear this anguished hush, deep down, oh my God, more than anguished—*agonized*. It's like that painting *The Scream* by Munch (*pronounced Muunhk*). You know the one...

PAUL makes the Munch face by pressing his hands to his cheeks and turning his mouth into an hourglass.

The silent scream. (*he slowly faces the audience.*) And I'm thinking, we got to let the scream out. We got to free ourselves from this endless cycle of suffering.

WOO-WOO

Do you think it could be a projection?

PAUL

Projection?

WOO-WOO

The Munch. Something you've pent up?

PAUL

No. It's a hand-me-down inheritance embedded in our cells from trauma after trauma.

CATH

So what does that have to do with you getting fired?

PAUL

(clears throat)

I had to do something. Right then. So, I told the students... *(moves toward audience)* I want you to put your tests sheets down right now and I want you to listen to me.

CATH and WOO-WOO follow PAUL, slightly behind, one on each side.

PAUL

I told them about the Munch. The snuffed scream. *(to audience)* Until we release it, we're sucking air, spinning nowhere, millennia after millennia.

PAUL steps off stage and goes among audience as if they're his students.

PAUL

I'm asking you to free your Munch. *(hand gestures to audience)* Stand up. Press your hands into your cheeks, and yell! Wail it out from the back of Time!

PAUL makes Munch mouth, shouts so loud his body quakes.

PAUL

Yowhhhh!

**It's neither expected or important that the audience play along.*

PAUL

Just when it tries to sound off, it's choked off. Messiahs and prophets invoke the Munch only to have their throats slit. The youth rise to resist, but their voices get choked off in battlefields—Peloponnesia to... to... Vietnam. On and on... *(to audience)* Now roar! Wake the graves!

PAUL presses his hands against his cheeks.

PAUL

Yowhh!

PAUL pivots, faces the stage like he's one of the audience, looks over his shoulder, waves his arms again for everyone to stand, cups hands around his mouth and hollers.

PAUL

I still can't hear you! Yowhhhh!

He returns to the stage— sideways— his left arm sweeps across the audience.

The students didn't hold back. Some howled, some shrieked. It was beautiful. A wild, ear-splitting eruption. And emotional. I teared up. But right afterward, alarms went off. Hearing our screams, they thought it was an active shooter.

CATH

Nooo.

PAUL

They evacuated the entire school and sent all the students home.

CATH

Oh, God.

PAUL

And me, they fired me on the spot.

CATH

Oh, jeez, Dad.

PAUL

Don't "Oh jeez Dad" me. It's him. Him and his woo-woo. *(turns to WOO-WOO)* You did it! You just said it would stir things up. And it... *(grabs WOO-WOO by the vest, shakes him)*... did!

CATH

Stop!

CATH pulls PAUL 'S arms down, steps between them. WOO-WOO lifts his walking stick in self-defense.

PAUL
(to CATH)

He ruined me!

CATH

Look at me. Look at me! How is that? How? *(she points toward bedroom.)* You don't sleep where he treated the land. That's where Mom sleeps. You snore. *(points to other bedroom)* You sleep down the hall!

PAUL

No-no. Last night. Your mom. She called me.

Lights come up on bed where MARIE stands. She wears a simple bathrobe.

MARIE

Sweetheart?

PAUL

Yeah?

MARIE

Can you come in here?

PAUL goes to MARIE. Steps upstage into the light.

PAUL

What is it, dear?

MARIE stands next to the head of the bed. She tilts the pillow up.

MARIE

It's for you.

Slow fade to black.

END

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